

REMARKS

This paper is in response to the Official Action mailed July 15, 2004. A petition for a one-month extension of time, extending the time to respond from October 15, 2004 until November 15, 2004 is enclosed herewith and incorporated by reference.

As an initial matter, Applicants note that the claims have been amended to simplify prosecution in this matter. Independent claim 7 has been amended to include the limitations of dependent claims 8 and 11 and claims 8 and 11 have been canceled, and independent claim 12 has been amended to include the limitations of dependent claims 13 and 14 and claims 13 and 14 have been canceled. Entry of the amendment is respectfully requested.

Claims 7, 10 and 12 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Tilby in view of Tisch or Eriksson, Fischer, and Walsh. The Examiner alleges that Tilby discloses a process of making a lignocellulosic board, but is silent with regard to injecting a steam to preheat a mat in a belt press. The Examiner further alleges that it would have been obvious to inject a steam to pre-heat a mat in a belt press taught by Tilby because it is a common practice in the art of making fiber boards to steam pre-heat a mat in a belt press before the mat is press-cured as exemplified in the teachings of Tisch or Eriksson et al. The Examiner admits that a heat-pressed mat in a belt press generating/emitting gaseous material is not expressly disclosed, but appears to state that this is inherent in the references.

Claims 8, 9 and 14 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over the references cited above and further in view of the alleged Admitted Prior Art wherein Applicants state that a well known problem with prior art manufacturing technology is that gases are generated in the press during the compression process.

Claims 11 and 13 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over the references cited above, and further in view of Puumalainen, Holik, Lehtinen and Westelaken. The Examiner admits that Eriksson does not disclose using a vacuum/suction means to collect gases in a conditioning zone, but such would have been obvious in the art as such is a conventional method of capturing gases in the art. The Examiner also states that the secondary references teach re-using spent (i.e. heated) coolant somewhere at another point in the process taught by each of these references.

Applicants respectfully traverse these rejections, particularly in view of the present amendment. Applicants respectfully submit that there is no combination of the cited

prior art references that would have rendered the claimed invention obvious. Each of the method claims, claims 7, 9 and 10, require that the captured steam and gaseous emissions are transported to a combustion plant, and that the lignocellulosic boards produced are passed to an after-conditioning unit which generates a stream of suction air which is heated to a temperature greater than 100°C and used for supplying the hot air to the steam injection press. Likewise, claim 12 requires that the claimed apparatus include means for transporting the captured steam and gaseous emissions to a combustion plant and include an after conditioning unit for subsequently conditioning the lignocellulosic boards produced and generating a stream of suction air, a heater for heating the stream of suction air, and supply means for supplying the heated stream of suction air to the hot air unit. The claimed invention provides a novel method and apparatus for making lignocellulosic boards that results in heat economy and more efficient prevention of gaseous emissions.

The Examiner has not cited any reference that discloses that the steam and gaseous emissions are transported to a combustion plant. Instead, the Examiner asserts that it is common practice in the art to incinerate polluting gases during a manufacturing process. Even if incinerating polluting gases is common practice during a manufacturing process, the claimed invention is not rendered obvious because simply stating that it is known to incinerate polluting gases in a manufacturing process does not provide any teaching, suggestion or motivation to incinerate polluting gases in a method of making lignocellulosic board. Moreover, the method of the claimed invention includes transporting the steam and gaseous emissions to a combustion plant, which is not common practice. Indeed, none of the references cited provide any teaching or suggestion to combine a method of making lignocellulosic board with incineration of polluting gases produced by such a method, let alone any teaching or suggestion to combine a method of making lignocellulosic board and transporting the steam and gaseous emissions produced by such a method.

Furthermore, Applicants respectfully disagree with the Examiner's characterization of the alleged Admitted Prior Art. Applicants point out that a well known problem with prior art manufacturing technology is that gases are generated in the press during the compression process. These prior art methods require installation of complicated and expensive equipment, as stated by Applicants. Applicants have provided a method and apparatus to solve this problem without the need to install expensive equipment which is disclosed by Applicants in the section of the specification entitled Summary Of The Invention,

and claimed by the present application. There is nothing in the section of the specification entitled Background Of The Invention that provides a teaching, suggestion or motivation, based on the prior art manufacturing technology, to transport the steam and gaseous emissions produced by a method of producing lignocellulosic boards to a combustion plant.

Therefore, there is no combination of the cited references that would render the present invention obvious. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of this rejection.

As stated above, each of the claims require a stream of suction air to be used for supplying hot air to the steam injection press in an after-conditioning unit. None of the references cited disclose using suction air to supply hot air to the injection press. Indeed, the Examiner does not even address this recitation; he only discusses using suction means to collect gases in a conditioning zone. The Examiner asserts that Puumalainen, Holik, Lehtinen and Westelaken teach re-using spent (i.e. heated) coolant somewhere at another point in the process taught by each of these references. However, none of these references teach or suggest that the hot air supplied to the injection press is supplied in the form of suction air, and further, that the stream of suction air is generated by an after-conditioning unit. Thus, there is no combination of the cited references that would render the present invention obvious. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of this rejection.

In light of the amendment made herein and the foregoing arguments, it is respectfully submitted that all of the claims in this application now possess the requisite novelty, utility and unobviousness to warrant their immediate allowance, and such action is therefore respectfully solicited.

If, however, for any reason the Examiner does not believe that such action can be taken at this time, it is respectfully requested that he telephone applicants' attorney at (908) 654-5000 in order to overcome any additional objections which he might have.


Application No.: 09/830,864

Docket No.: GROTH 3.3-023

If there are any additional charges in connection with this requested amendment, the Examiner is authorized to charge Deposit Account No. 12-1095 therefor.

Dated: November 15, 2004

Respectfully submitted,

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